

National Marine Mammal Laboratory

Marine Mammal Species

Harbor Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)

In the eastern North Pacific Ocean, the harbor porpoise ranges from Point Barrow, along the Alaska coast, and down the west coast of North America to Point Conception, California. They are found primarily in coastal waters and occur most frequently in waters less than 100 m in depth. They are widely distributed and locally abundant. Harbor porpoise are small, most under 2 m in length and 90 kg in weight. They are most often seen singly, in pairs, or groups of up to 10, although there are reports of aggregations of up to 200 harbor porpoise. Most seasonal movements appear to be inshore-offshore and may be influenced by prey availability or the presence of ice-free waters. They are non-descript in coloration and behavior; they infrequently breach or porpoise clear of the water. Unlike most other porpoises, they do not approach boats to bow ride. Little is known of their reproductive biology: most mating occurs in summer; the gestation period is about 11 months; most births occur between May and July.



NMML Research

- [Current Research Projects by the Cetacean Assessment & Ecology Program](#)
- [Current Research Projects by the California Current Ecosystems Program](#)
- [Publications: search AFSC database for Harbor Porpoises](#)
- [Posters: search AFSC database for Harbor Porpoises](#)
- [Quarterly Reports](#)

Recent NMML Harbor Porpoise Publications

- HOBBS, R. C., and J. M. WAITE. 2010. Abundance of harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) in three Alaskan regions, corrected for observer errors due to perception bias and species misidentification, and corrected for animals submerged from view. Fish. Bull., U.S. 108:251-267. (.pdf, 1.35 MB). [Online](#).
- DAHLHEIM, M., A. YORK, R. TOWELL, J. WAITE, and J. BREIWICK. 2000. Harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) abundance in Alaska: Bristol Bay to southeast Alaska, 1991-1993. Mar. Mammal Sci. 16:28-45.
- LAAKE, J., D. RUGH, and L. BARAFF. 1998. Observations of harbor porpoise in the vicinity of acoustic alarms on a set gill net. U.S. Dep. Commer., NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-AFSC-84, 40 p. (.pdf, 504kb) [Online](#).
- OSMEK, S., J. CALAMBOKIDIS, J. LAAKE, P. GEARIN, R. DeLONG, J. SCORDINO, S. JEFFRIES, and R. BROWN. 1997. Assessment of the status of harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) in Oregon and Washington waters, 46 p. U.S. Dep. Commer., NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-AFSC-76. (.pdf, 1.18mb) [Online](#).
- [Search the AFSC database for additional Harbor Porpoise publications](#)

Recent NMML Harbor Porpoise Posters

- *Population Declines of Harbor Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) in Inside Waters of Southeast Alaska* 2.62 MB [Online](#).
- [Search the AFSC database for additional Harbor Porpoise posters](#)

Harbor Porpoise Stock Assessment Reports

- Bering Sea: [2006](#) [2003](#) [2000](#) [1997](#)
- Central California (split into Monterey Bay stock and Morro Bay stock in 2002): [2001](#) [2000](#) [1999](#)
- Gulf of Alaska: [2006](#) [2003](#) [2000](#) [1997](#)
- Gulf of Maine-Bay of Fundy: [2006](#) [2005](#) [2003](#) [2002](#) [2001](#) [2000](#) [1999](#) [1998](#) [1997](#) [1995](#)
- Inland WA: [2006](#) [2003](#) [2002](#) [2000](#) [1999](#) [1998](#)
- Monterey Bay: [2004](#) [2003](#) [2002](#)

- Morro Bay: [2004](#) [2003](#) [2002](#)
- Northern California-Southern Oregon, formerly Northern California: [2002](#) [2001](#) [2000](#) [1999](#)
- Oregon-Washington Coastal: [2006](#) [2003](#) [2002](#) [2000](#) [1999](#) [1998](#)
- San Francisco-Russian River: [2004](#) [2003](#) [2002](#)
- Southeast Alaska: [2006](#) [2003](#) [2000](#) [1997](#)

NMML Education Web (these pages are targeted toward students!)

- Currently unavailable

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